



**High-Level Side Event in the margins of the General Assembly  
High-Level Debate on “Equal Access to Justice for All:  
Advancing Reforms for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies”**

15 June 2023

13:15-14:45 (NY Time) – 19:15-20:45 (Vienna Time)

UNHQ, Conference Room 6/UN Web TV

Ms. Waly, Executive Director of UNODC,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank UNODC and the Permanent Missions of Austria, Canada, the Dominican Republic and Thailand for bringing us together to share views and experiences on how we can mobilize around SDG 16, for progress on one of its key components, which is enhancing equal access to justice for all.

It is crucial for achieving fair, humane, effective, inclusive and efficient justice, so that all groups in society can equally enjoy their rights, to build societies, and allow them to grow. It is also at the heart of the overarching objective of the 2030 Agenda: *to leave no one behind*.



Access to justice is part of target 16.3 under SDG 16, “Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all”. In that target, access to justice is associated with promoting the rule of law and for very good reasons. This provides a clear linkage between access to justice and other parts of SDG 16 that are strongly affected by how the rule of law is upheld, such as anti-corruption, non-discrimination, the provision of legal identity for all, transparent and accountable institutions, as well as inclusion and participation. Thus, the SDGs reflect the multi-faceted nature of access to justice and its broad connections with a multitude of goals and targets.

Two weeks ago, I attended the fourth edition of the SDG 16 Conference in Rome organised by IDLO, Italy and DESA. The discussions at the Conference illustrated some of these connections. For instance, the discussion highlighted how developing fair and effective processes and mechanisms that are people-centered, gender-responsive and grounded in human rights is critical to understanding the root causes and drivers of conflict, while mitigating the risk of disputes and grievances descending into violence. The discussions on land governance highlighted the bias that can affect justice systems in addressing conflicts over land rights and the associated violence against Indigenous Peoples. We also had a discussion on corruption highlighted the need for independent justice systems and empowered anti-corruption institutions. On 2 May we held a Special meeting of ECOSOC on fighting corruption.



Four years ago, the Task Force on Justice published a well-known report, entitled “Justice for all.” The report outlined an agenda for action at the national level articulated around three axes: (i) Resolving the justice problems that matter most to people; (ii) preventing justice problems and create opportunities for people to participate fully in their societies and economies; and (iii) investing in justice systems and institutions that work for people. The report also urged the international community to better measure progress on access to justice, to support national implementation, and to intensify efforts to promote and secure resources for access to justice.

We have the chance to create a better world if we work together to ensure equal access to justice for all. ECOSOC is a central forum for this endeavour, in particular, through the contributions made by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the Commission on the Status of Women.

By promoting inclusivity, diversity, and needs-based solutions to reach the poor, the vulnerable, and the marginalized, we can help rebuild trust in government and the rule of law, which is essential to SDG 16 and to accelerate progress towards sustainable development and the implementation of the Agenda as a whole.

Thank you.